



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Audubon Zoo Raises Awareness on World Elephant Day

(New Orleans, La.) - Audubon Zoo will spotlight the urgent plight of elephants and the many challenges facing the majestic animal in the wild during World Elephant Day - Saturday, August 12, 2017. The annual awareness event at Audubon Zoo features chats with animal care staff and elephant enrichment activities throughout the day.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m., guests can participate in children's activities, learn about daily elephant care and test their wildlife knowledge with elephant trivia.

An elephant conservation raffle will offer chances to win prizes - including an elephant barn tour and passes to Audubon attractions. Monetary proceeds benefit the Sumatran Conservation Response Units funded by the International Elephant Foundation, which supports elephant conservation, education, research and management programs worldwide.

"Each year, poachers in Africa slaughter about 35,000 elephants - an average of 96 elephants a day," said Joel Hamilton, Vice President and General Curator at Audubon Zoo. "This annual event gives us the opportunity to share information and ideas about the worldwide plight of elephants and what can be done to ensure their survival into the future. By keeping the conversation going, we can keep our guests informed, educated and empowered to help prevent the extinction of these incredible animals."

Both Asian and African elephant populations are in crisis. While human-elephant conflict and habitat loss are rapidly shrinking Asian elephant numbers, Africa's elephants are being killed at an alarming rate to supply the world ivory trade.

Facts about the Crisis:

- 96Elephants.org is dedicated to uniting a range of organizations to coordinate and leverage their collective influence, constituencies and resources to save African elephants from extinction.
- The United States has been the second largest consumer of illegal ivory after China. In response to efforts by conservation groups, the federal government recently enacted a near-total ban on the sale of ivory in the United States to protect elephants.
- The current poaching crisis differs from that of previous eras, when individuals were driven to kill elephants and sell their tusks largely to feed their families. In recent years, sophisticated criminal enterprises have gotten involved in response to high demand from the Chinese who consider carved ivory to be a high-status commodity.
- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) identified elephants as one of the 10 SAFE Signature Species on which to focus planning and conservation action. Since that time, experts from the AZA zoological community, non-profit conservation organizations, and government agencies, have gathered for strategic meetings to identify current population threats and the conservation actions needed to address them.
- In recent years, 30 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums took part in a variety of field conservation projects benefiting Asian elephants. Between 2010 and 2014, the AZA community invested more than \$1.5 million in Asian elephant conservation, plus an additional \$650,000 to support organizations such as the International Elephant Foundation.

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For more information on elephant conservation, view 96elephants.org and share the hashtag #SavingSpecies on August 12.

World Elephant Day activities are included in admission to Audubon Zoo, 6500 Magazine Street.

Media Contact:

Frank Donze

Communications Specialist

Office: (504) 212-5335 / Cell: (504) 232-7461

fdonze@auduboninstitute.org

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